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THE RISE OF SECOND ORDER POWERS:

New Focus on Regional Politics

by



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NOTE: This working paper was prepared as an aid for clarifying conceptual approaches to understanding new trends in regional and global politics. It provides the analytical framework and some of the tentative conclusions of a study on Cuba, Venezuela, and Mexico as potential second order powers in the Caribbean, which will be published by OPR later this year. This paper is not for attribution or citation, does not represent an official CIA view, and the judgments expressed are the author's own responsibility. Comments are welcomed by the author, who can be reached at [redacted] the Office of Political Research, CIA, Washington, D. C. 20505.

WORKING PAPER

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MAJOR CONCLUSIONS

The international arena in which the US seeks to apply its power and influence to achieve essential national goals is characterized by growing complexity and uncertainty. One major source of this change is the rise in influence and assertiveness, among the developing countries, of a number of potential "second order" powers, whose ambitions and activities seem likely increasingly to complicate the efforts of the US and other "first order" powers to cope with global and, especially, regional issues. The purpose of this informal study is to develop a conceptual framework for identifying potential second order powers, for understanding how they interact in a regional context, and for comprehending what kind of new regional power and influence patterns may appear and how these will affect US foreign policy alternatives.

Some tentative conclusions of this study are:

- The international political system is changing as new sources of influence appear and traditional sources become more costly to use. This diffusion of international

power and influence has created new latitude for the aggressive assertion of national interests by developing countries generally, and a variety of rapidly modernizing nations will probably take increasing advantage of fading super-power domination to attempt to carve out their own regional (second order) spheres of influence.

- The single most important characteristic of countries approaching second order power status is an articulated sense of national purpose and national goals that motivates the leadership to strive for regional dominance.
- The potential second order power which possesses the greatest national power may not be the most influential country in the region. Actual influence depends primarily on the motivation of the leadership to use national capabilities for external as well as domestic purposes and on how closely the influence capabilities of a country match the needs and susceptibility

to influence of the other countries of the region.

- Issues of regional dominance will not be settled quickly in most areas in the next ten years. A number of different regional patterns of interactions may develop, each of which will pose different opportunities and obstacles for pursuing US foreign policy objectives. One common (but probably transitional) pattern might feature a period in which two or more potential regional powers are primarily focused on internal development and only slowly build a network of both cooperative and competitive relationships among themselves and with the states in their region. This pattern might evolve into an open struggle for domination during which relationships are highly conflictive.
- In time, either one of the second order powers may rise to dominate the region, or an implicit

arrangement to divide the area into sub-regional spheres of influence may be agreed on. (Such a division is plausible among Cuba, Mexico and Venezuela in the Caribbean.)

-- Whatever power patterns develop, the likelihood is that regional politics will become more complex, more relevant to global political trends, and more salient to US policymaking. US interests in every region, whether relations there are peaceful or full of discord, will probably come under increasingly critical scrutiny, and even attack, as regional interests and concerns become more sharply defined and aggressively expressed.

I. INTRODUCTION: THE SETTING

The image of the US as a bound giant, still possessed of overwhelming strength but unable to use it effectively, is obviously overdrawn. Nonetheless, the international political system and the place of the US in it is not what it used to be five or ten years ago: while the US seems less able to accomplish its foreign policy purposes, a host of other countries, particularly in the developing world, seem more capable of and aggressive in pursuing their own individual national interests, often to the immediate detriment of those of the US.

Two basic trends are shaping the relative change in the freedom of action of the US and certain developing countries in the international arena. First, the US is increasingly constrained from using its power and influence to resolve in its favor disputes with smaller states because attempting unilaterally to impose US-preferred solutions may have a serious adverse affect on other important relationships and problems. That is, the rapidly growing inter-relatedness of international relationships and problems not

only raises the costs to the US of bringing influence to bear on any single issue but also increases the uncertainty about the outcome because the consequences of exercising that influence will often spill over beyond the boundaries of the specific problem to be addressed.

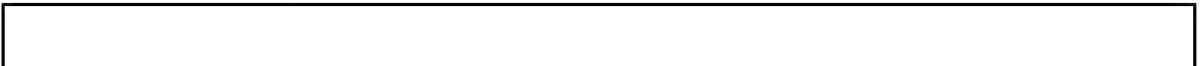
In Latin America, for instance, the costs of using US military force to prevent a feared Communist takeover of a government, as occurred in the Dominican Republic in 1965, would probably be much higher today. The policy of relaxing tensions with the USSR might be adversely affected. Almost certainly, the attempt to build cooperative, non-interventionist relations with the countries of Latin America and to solve peacefully long standing problems such as the future status of the Panama Canal would be jeopardized. Such an action would also probably provide the more radical developing countries, like Cuba and Algeria, with an issue with which to arouse anti-American sentiments and set back US efforts to address North-South issues at international gatherings in a cooperative vein.* Finally it would probably create significantly higher domestic discord in the US than the earlier intervention did.

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Secondly, power differentials among developing countries are growing rapidly. At the top end of the spectrum a few countries, such as Brazil, Venezuela, Iran, India, Turkey, and Indonesia, seem to be developing the institutions, leadership, and economic base that both underpin and are part of the process that can lead to rapid and sustained modernization.* While the political and economic fortunes of these countries are reversible and do, in fact, fluctuate considerably, nevertheless they have reached the stage in development where they have both the need and ability to project their influence noticeably and persistently into their regions and to some extent into the international arena as well. They have the need to do so because they must increasingly gain the markets, capital, technology, and goods from abroad that feed the modernization process.

In turn, acquiring these factors of modernization has two effects. It contributes to the creation of the means of projecting

*Modernization can be defined most broadly as the process of social, economic, and political change that occurs in all but the most isolated societies in reaction to external pressures and internal dislocations. The politics of modernization, including the prerequisites for stimulating and managing rapid and sustained societal change, are discussed in



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national power and influence, such as a larger industrial base, greater military strength, stronger commercial import-export capabilities, and larger more efficient public bureaucracies and private sector elites with international orientations and capabilities. In addition, the pursuit of national influence abroad through expanded public and private means often creates vested interests which must be protected and which tend to develop expansionist momentum of their own.

The net effect of the growing costs of unilaterally exercising US power in foreign areas and the expansion of external interests and influence of a group of rapidly modernizing developing nations is a significant change in the pattern of international relations that has existed since the end of World War II. Global political relations up through the 1950's and into the 1960's were essentially structured into two hierarchical systems led by the pre-eminent military powers, the US and the USSR. Actual and would-be regional powers existed within these hierarchies, but their ability to create their own spheres of influence, independent of or in potential conflict with the desires of the superpowers, was highly circumscribed. For the most part they were incapable of sustaining significant social, political or economic initiatives that conflicted

with the perceived interests of the superpowers, and the latter, when they chose to, could bring strong influence to bear on the second order powers and their hinterlands economically and politically and, when necessary, militarily as well. To the extent that regional geo-political systems existed, then, they functioned either as highly subordinate parts of two global hierarchies or dealt with local issues of little immediate concern to the superpowers and, hence, had little relevance to world politics.

This highly structured dual hierarchical model of world politics has become increasingly obsolescent for comprehending current relations between the US and the developing nations and for understanding some of the major challenges to US foreign political and economic influence that will arise in the next five to ten years. As issues related to military security have receded as the primary determinants of foreign policy at the global strategic level, a host of other issues, mainly economic in content, have greatly increased in importance. This change in the nature and number of issues at stake in world politics has been accompanied by (and provided an opportunity for) a rapid expansion in the number of nations that can yield new international or regional political and economic influence. For example, the new salience

of trade, monetary, and natural resource issues has rapidly increased the potential influence of those nations which have the kinds of economic strength relevant for exerting leverage in contests over these issues.

The shift in sources of international influence is causing changes in the shape of the world political system at two levels. First, while clearly superior military power restricts superpower status to only the US and the USSR, the growing economic strength of Japan, Europe (in the framework of the Common Market), and (emergingly) China have created three new influence centers (together with the US and the USSR) on the first order level. These nations increasingly exert influence on each other's decision makers and on the decision makers in developing nations, often displacing the influence of the US and, to a lesser degree, the USSR in the process.

Secondly, the new relevance of global economic issues to foreign policy is strengthening the influence potential of those developing nations which either control essential raw materials or which are undergoing rapid economic growth. In some instances these countries are beginning to achieve status as second order powers and to develop their own regional spheres of influence.

The overall affect of these two developments -- in short -- is to complicate considerably the international environment within which US foreign policy choices are made. The role of regional politics (i.e., new patterns of regional cooperation and conflict) in creating opportunities and obstacles for pursuing US national interests and influence abroad will be the major focus of analysis in the remainder of this essay.

II. SECOND ORDER POWERS AND REGIONAL POLITICS

The state of flux in regional politics has different causes in different parts of the world. Within some regions, such as Latin America, the old sense of hierarchical subordination inside a geo-political unit largely dominated by a single superpower is breaking down. In others, such as South Asia, the perception of regional political relations as essentially determined by superpower competition within that region is disappearing.* The

*The foreign policies of Iran and India are increasingly influenced by national perceptions of each other as potential regional competitors apart from consideration of the role of US-USSR competition in South Asia. This new sense of national purpose in a regional context for India and Iran is discussed in two articles in an issue of the Journal of International Affairs (Vol. 29, No. 2, Fall 1975) devoted to a discussion of "Power in the Third World."

commonality in both cases is that regional issues either not directly involving the superpowers or which place the region as a whole in conflict with the superpowers are gaining in importance, and leading regional states are beginning to exercise relatively more autonomous decision-making roles. For the most part, however, new regional power balances have not been established; uncertainty with respect to how regional politics will evolve exists because two or more states are potential or actual competitors for intra-regional superiority.

In the following sections, then, this changing environment for US foreign decision making will be analyzed as a function of the rapidly evolving character of regional politics. In particular this study will examine

- how potential second order powers can be identified and their likely foreign policy trends projected, and
- what are the important patterns of interactions that will increasingly characterize relations, and how can they be detected and measured.

A. What Makes a Second Order Power?

One recent attempt in academic literature to draw up a list of potential second order powers suggests that the following developing countries are in that category: Mexico, Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, Algeria, Nigeria, India, Iran, Turkey, Egypt, Vietnam, and Indonesia. With the exception of Brazil, none of these have clearly attained second order status and become the predominant power in their region, but all have some possibilities to do so.*

Generally, a second order power is likely to seek dominance in its own region and to attempt regularly and deliberately to

*This list of which developing countries are potential second order powers is taken from Saul B. Cohen, "The Emergence of a New Second Order of Powers in the International System" in Nuclear Proliferation and the Near Nuclear Countries, Part One, Schulz Marwah, ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Ballinger Publishing Company, 1976). The concept of "region" in this paper, which is used in a geo-political rather than a strictly geographic sense, is also derived from the Cohen article. In Cohen's terms, states are members of a region because of their proximity to each other and their interactions, not simply because they fall within an area bounded by some physical feature. For this reason, geo-political regions are most usefully perceived as not permanently fixed since the range of a country's interactions with other geographically proximate countries can, over time, expand and contract.

exert limited influence over a number of specific events in other regions. Within a global power hierarchy it can be separated on the lower side from countries that are regionally important but unlikely candidates for second order status by the fact that the latter can influence events in a region but have little capability of eventually dominating a region or of regularly affecting political, economic or military events in other regions. On the upper side a second order power can be distinguished from the first order of powers by the latter's ability regularly and deliberately to influence events and the outcomes of a wide range of issues in many regions simultaneously (i.e., at the global level).

The following are some of the necessary attributes a nation will have if it obtains the status of second order power:

- an articulated sense of national purpose and a hierarchy of national goals that motivates the leadership to strive for regional dominance;
- relatively strong and effective domestic political and economic institutions which produce internal political stability, policy continuity and assured implementation, and sustained economic growth;

- sufficient military power to be perceived by other states in the region as capable of achieving its essential national security goals;
- an industrial base large enough to produce some conventional military hardware, some intermediary goods, and most necessary consumer goods (both for internal consumption and for use in regional trade);
- the capacity to absorb and use advanced technology and, eventually, to produce some of its own technology so that it does not remain totally dependent on the advanced industrial states in this area;
- a sizeable (in comparison with other LDCs) pool of skilled personnel for service abroad (diplomatic, commercial, technical, and/or military, depending on the strategy of influence expansion adopted).
- sufficient economic, cultural and political homogeneity or complementarity with the

countries of its region that it can act as
an integrative rather than disruptive force.

Of the above factors, the first is probably the one most crucial to distinguishing which among several potential second order powers in a specific region will make a serious attempt to realize that potential. The other factors are all necessary pre-conditions, but a country's leaders are likely to strive for second order status only if they have a clear strategy of national development which is perceived to require for its success an assertive influence role in its region. And the stronger the belief by policy makers that the effective modernization of their nation either depends on externally acquired benefits or could be disrupted by adverse influences from the foreign environment, the greater the effort will be to extend control over that environment.

Among the modernization strategy -- foreign environment linkages that might lead decision-makers aggressively to seek new influence in their geo-political region are the following:

- An economic development strategy that depends
heavily on expanding regional export markets

or having assured access to externally located raw materials

- An ideological mind-set of a dominant elite that their power position depends importantly on spreading their governing values to the leaders of other (often surrounding) countries
- Perceived danger to the economic or physical security of the potential second-order power if nearby countries are controlled by hostile political forces or subject to chronic political instability
- The perception that the potential second-order power's international bargaining position could be improved by extending its values to other states in its region in order to build a coalition.

Even with an apparently adequate material, geographic, and motivational endowment, however, considerable lag time may occur between the realization by a country's leaders (at

least as reflected in their rhetoric) that they should seek regional influence and a serious national effort to do so. One common cause of this lag is the dead weight imposed by the country's foreign policy tradition and history. A state which has traditionally eschewed external involvement, for example, will tend to move much more slowly and, at least initially, have fewer instruments through which to strive to realize its potential as a regional leader than one which has been at least sporadically active in attempting to exert influence in the affairs of its neighbors.*

B. Intra-regional Dynamics of Potential Second Order Powers

In almost all developing areas two or more nations seem to have the potential to become second order powers and to establish significant regional spheres of influence. The politics of these regions is becoming increasingly complex

*Thus Mexico, with its long history of foreign non-involvement, has much greater inertia to overcome in launching effective commercial, diplomatic, and technical aid initiatives in the Caribbean than does Cuba, given the latter's active efforts to aid revolutionary groups throughout Latin America in the 1960's.

as the number, frequency and intensity of the interactions of these potential regional powers multiplies both among themselves and with the smaller states of their regions.

There are three aspects of this interaction which particularly merit analysis since they will directly affect the opportunities and obstacles facing any potential second order power which attempts to achieve regional dominance.*

1. The configuration of influence capabilities, national goals, and perceived national needs among the states of a region.

A state's potential capability for exerting influence depends on how fortunate it is in its possession of the sources of national power (e.g., size; population; geographic location; disposable manpower, organizational and natural resources) relative to the states it may wish to influence. Its actual

*These aspects of interaction are consolidated and adapted from those discussed in the following three articles: Louis J. Cantori and Steven L. Spiegel, "The International Relations of Regions," Michael Brecher, "International Relations and Asian Studies: The Subordinate State System of Southern Asia," and William Zartman, "Africa as a Subordinate State System in International Relations." All in Regional Politics and World Order, eds. Richard A. Falk and Saul H. Mendlovitz (San Francisco: W. H. Freeman and Co., 1973).

ability to influence other states, however, and the pattern of interaction that develops between them depends additionally on the goals and needs that the decision makers of each state perceive their nation has. If the mix of capabilities and goals of one state are particularly congruent with the susceptibilities of the other states, then it will have a distinct initial advantage in attempting to expand its influence in the area. If, to the contrary, its capabilities do not match well the susceptibilities of the other states, then its ability to exert influence will be more limited even if it is nominally the most powerful state in the region.

One region where this kind of differential currently exists and is apparently affecting patterns of interaction and influence is the area of the Caribbean. Both Venezuela and Mexico are, by many objective measures such as GNP, level and amount of industrial development, territorial and population size, and available natural resource base, potentially more powerful nations than Cuba. Yet the latter seems to be rapidly gaining more influence in Jamaica and Guyana than are the two larger countries. One major reason for this apparent discrepancy

is that Cuba's existing influence capabilities match up much more closely with the perceived needs of the leaders of Jamaica and Guyana than do those of Mexico and Venezuela. The Prime Ministers of both of the former nations have committed themselves to developing their countries into socialist states led by very strong government parties. They are also interested in improving the productivity of a variety of domestic industries (e.g., fisheries, sugar cane growing and processing) and providing expanded public benefits for their working class supporters (e.g., low cost housing, paramedic services in rural areas). Finally, both Prime Ministers believe they need enhanced personal security to protect themselves from political enemies, and they desire to begin the ideological indoctrination of their intelligence services and armed forces to make them more responsive to political control. Cuba is much better equipped with the trained personnel, organizational competence, and technical knowledge necessary to meet these needs than are Mexico or Venezuela. Over the short run, at least, the greater potential capability of the latter countries to supply capital. markets, or higher technology are not as relevant to the immediate

perceived needs of the Jamaican and Guyanese government leaders and, hence, the spread of their influence is not as rapid.

2. The nature of inter-state relations within the region.

This aspect refers to the kind, quantity, and intensity of interactions among the members of a region. The types of data sought might include exchanges of diplomatic, technical, military and commercial personnel, tourist and immigration flows, subregional trading and investment patterns, and channels and types of communications (e.g., mail, mass media, transportation links). Analysis of this data should reveal the range, frequency, number, and importance (in terms of results produced as related to essential national concerns) of the entire network of transactions between and among the countries of a region. From this kind of analysis it should then be possible to draw empirically based conclusions about what patterns of influence actually exist, what the preferred means are of each country for attempting to exert influence, and whether the means used by two countries in a third country tend to put the two in competition with each other or, in fact, tend not to overlap.

3. The rules and structures of regional interaction.

States which interact with each other will, over time, usually develop a consensus about acceptable modes of behavior towards each other, both in terms of hierarchies of agreed on goals and limits on permissible means for achieving those goals. These "rules" usually function as guidelines for policy decisions and are reinforced to the extent that decisions are made in conformity with them or changed if decisions regularly break them. Occasionally, some of these rules of intra-regional behavior are codified in security pacts (NATO, SEATO) or economic unions (European Common Market, Andean Pact), but, more often, they remain at the level of implicit understandings. One analyst, for example, has enumerated four systemic rules which he believes influences the behavior of African states towards each other. They range from a consensus that internally generated regional solutions are to be preferred over externally imposed solutions to African problems, to a general agreement that wars of conquest are not acceptable policy alternatives for resolving disputes among the states of the

region.* Similar kinds of guidelines to policy choices, in addition to ones unique to a particular regional environment, can probably be found among any grouping of states with enough cohesion to be considered a region. Understanding these implicit rules can shed useful light on what some of the openings or barriers may be for the pursuit of influence by a potential second order power.

To one degree or another the three aspects of regional politics described above are in a state of flux in all the developing areas of the world. In order to attempt to understand how political relations may evolve in any particular region, and especially which countries are moving most rapidly and certainly towards regional power status, a set of criteria for measuring change must be sought. In part these criteria

*Zartman, op. cit., pp, 393-395. The partial functioning of the first "rule" may help account for the stand off that developed at the Organization of African Unity summit meeting as January 1976 which considered the question of whether or not to recognize the Soviet and Cuban backed Popular Movement as the legal government of Angola. The draft resolution submitted by the Anti-Popular Movement Group (22 of the represented countries) denounced all foreign intervention and called on the three warring Angolan groups to agree on a government of national unity.

will involve assessing internal economic and political development within each potential second order power since each increment of additional economic strength, internal political unity, and/or governing efficiency enhances national power, and, therefore, a country's putative ability to influence or coerce the other countries in its region.

Of probably greater importance, however, in terms of whether and how relations within a region are actually changing are criteria for determining if and in what fashion a country is converting its potential power into an actual reach for new influence. Some of the indicators that might be watched are the following:

- Restructuring of military forces to enhance regional deployment and sea control capabilities.
- Substantial new commitment of national manpower resources to regional diplomatic, commercial, technical training or military activities.
- Changes in immigration policies and tourist flows which have the effect of noticeably increasing the movement of people between the potential

second order power and the countries of its region.

- Efforts to increase transportation and communication ties with the region (e.g., expansion and redirection of national shipping and airlines capabilities to other states in the area; extension of road or railroad networks, or electrical power grids into adjoining states).
- Significant new trade or investment initiatives, especially efforts to supply goods or capital vital to another regional state's own modernization plans.
- A drive to expand social contacts, especially with rising young leaders from other regional states through such means as increased educational exchanges or offers to host regional organizations.

In sum, an analyst of regional power hierarchies should look for these kinds of indicators of change and examine them against an outline of, first, how the internal dynamics of potential

second order powers in the area affect their drive for regional influence and, secondly, how and to what degree the region is susceptible to influence expansion. Such an analysis should reveal:

- Which potential second order powers have the best internal and external conditions for realizing their regional ambitions
- The degree of potential or actual compatibility or conflict among the strategies and areas of expansion of the putative regional powers, and
- The eventual patterns of relations and structures of power that might develop if politics in the region evolved autonomously.

C. Extra-Regional Dynamics of Second Order Powers

Obviously, regional politics will not evolve independently of external influences. One set of influences are global trends, such as world-wide economic upturns and downturns or major wars fought outside the region, over which second-order powers have virtually no influence and the impact of which

on regional political developments would be very difficult to predict. Another set of influences, however, are more directly tied to decisions that second-order powers make and, hence, more susceptible to analysis. Two of the most important of these factors are the degree to which a regional power can successfully manipulate its relationships with one or more major (first order) powers, and the nature and extent of the links a second order power can develop with other, extra-regional, second order powers.*

1. Relations with Major Powers: Most second order powers are involved in ambiguous relations with one or more major powers. Although trade and other relations among second order powers are expanding, the primary inputs for their rapid development in the way of markets, capital, and technology will continue to come, for the foreseeable future, from the major industrial powers. At the same time, one of the marks of a second order power is that it has the ability to increase its autonomy of action in certain spheres, often at an apparent

* Cohen, op. cit., pp. 28-29.

cost to the interests of the major power upon which it has been traditionally dependent. As potential second order powers compete for dominance in a region, therefore, one important element of success will be the degree to which each state can resolve the ambiguity in its favor. The strongest competitor will generally be the one which can obtain the most benefits from its major power relationships at the least cost to its ability to act independently. For example, a developing state which can diversify its commerce so that it is less dependent on trading with a single partner can thereby gain important advantages when policy conflicts arise with that partner. In this fashion Brazil achieved sufficient freedom of action to negotiate successfully with West Germany for the uranium enrichment and reprocessing technology and facilities that the US refused to sell but, at the same time, did not lose the essential benefits it already receives from access to US markets, technology and private investment.

2. Links with Other Second Order Powers: In order to gain recognition of its elevated (in comparison with other developing countries) power status and to gain leverage in

world affairs that directly affect its well-being, a second order power needs to establish on-going relationships with second order powers outside its own region. The strength of these relationships and the benefits derivable from them will affect the political and economic influence of a state within its region just as the regional solidarity it can create for its own policies will directly contribute to its attractiveness as an ally of other, extra-regional second order powers. Thus, Venezuela's influence in Latin America is strengthened by its alliance, through OPEC, with other extra-regional powers, while its position in OPEC is enhanced by the support it can create for OPEC policies in its own region.

III. IMPLICATIONS

The central argument of this study is that considerable uncertainty exists with respect to how newly evolving intra-regional power and influence relationships will work out and that this state of flux in regional politics will have a major impact on the maintenance and pursuit of US political, economic, and military interests in the developing world over the next five to ten years. That is, the increased capability of some

developing nations to assert their own national interests either bilaterally with the US or in multilateral forums by forming coalitions with other developing nations both inside and outside their own regions appears to be a significant new development in international politics. But the power differential between the developed and the developing world (and particularly between the US and any potential competitors among the developing nations) remains so vast that phenomenon itself of the rise of second order powers either alone or in loose coalitions will probably not prove an unmanageable obstacle for realizing essential US policy preferences, at least over the short to medium term. Of considerable greater moment to US policy making over this term, however, will be the unstable environment likely to be created in most of the geo-political regions of the developing world by the quest for new influence by the leading nations in each of these regions. For one thing, as the number of actors who can affect US regional interests increases and as the competition for power and influence among the actors grows, deciding which actors to support on which issues will become much more complicated. More generally, both the struggle for dominance

and uncertainty as to the outcome are likely to bring about turmoil in which US interests, to the extent they are best served by maintenance of the status quo or very slow and orderly evolution, will often suffer.

Within this broad trend, a variety of types of regional power and influence alignments may appear, each of which will pose different opportunities and challenges to US relations with the countries in that area. Major powers, such as the US, will have some ability to affect whatever regional patterns that do evolve. But it is likely that the primary influence that shapes regional trends will be developments within the region itself: both the rapidity and direction of development exhibited by the strongest countries of each region and the way in which intra-regional relations work out among those countries. Eventually, in some regions it is possible that a single dominant power will emerge. In that circumstance US relations with the region as a whole will probably be determined largely by the state of bilateral relations with that second order power and, as a corollary, the US will be able increasingly to devote most of its attention in that region to that single relationship.

It is much more likely, however, that issues of regional dominance will not be settled so neatly in most regions of the world in the next ten years. Three other patterns, each one depending on a different evolution of combinations of conflict and cooperation among potential second order powers in a single region, are more probable. Each pattern poses somewhat different policy problems and opportunities for the US.

One pattern that might develop is a relatively cooperative but narrow set of relations between two potential regional powers. While this arrangement is probably the least likely of the three to persist for a long period because it is inherently unstable if both countries intend to become dominant in their region, it exists at least as a transitory condition in some regions today and could develop in other regions over the next five to ten years.* One condition bringing about

*This is the kind of relationship that exists today between Mexico and Venezuela. Their two Presidents have a strong affinity for each other, and they have cooperated in establishing a new regional organization, the Latin American Economic System (SELA). SELA excludes the US and is dedicated to advancing broad Latin American interests. While the two countries have worked together closely to set up SELA, to date other organizational, political, economic and cultural ties between them are not particularly numerous or intense.

this pattern would be the continued uneven movement by two countries towards second order status in the same region in which one country moves rapidly to establish regional influence while the other (with the potential power but without much motivation) moves more slowly. Another condition under which cooperative but only moderately active relations could exist would be if their drives for regional influence began in relatively non-competitive areas. Thus, for example, there need not be any immediate conflict between a state attempting to develop strong military or cultural relations with the countries in its region and one attempting to create strong commercial relations in the same area.

As long as the initial drive to regional influence by one country was not perceived as directly threatening or limiting by the other, they could, for some period of time, cooperate on some regional and global issues, sometimes to the possible detriment of the US. This cooperation could involve, for example, closely tied positions on an issue of overriding economic importance, such as a common oil policy towards the US by two oil producers in the same region (e.g.,

Mexico and Venezuela), or on political issues of common concern (e.g., race among the Black-dominated states of southern Africa).

The major policy problem for the US in dealing with this kind of pattern is that the level of uncertainty about how the situation will evolve is usually quite high. It is difficult to know what the long term consequences will be of a policy choice to support one country against another or to attempt to negotiate solutions that will apply to the region at large. Success and failure are difficult to predict since regional relationships are often changing, or soon likely to change, rapidly. The opposite side of this coin is that, simply because regional relationships are unstable, opportunities for exerting influence from outside may be greater and may have more impact now than when regional patterns are more firmly established.

Another possible pattern would feature a persistent high level of conflict between two competitors for regional domination. Policy options for the US in this case might range from neutrality (if no major US interest were threatened), to attempting to mediate or moderate the conflict (particularly, for example, if the opponents possessed crude nuclear capabilities and the conflict was

verging on open warfare), to intercession on the side of a preferred candidate for control of the region. Two regions where this kind of pattern might develop are South America (between Brazil and Argentina should the latter recover economically) and South Asia (between Iran and India).

A third pattern that might develop is an implicit balance-of-power arrangement in which two (or possibly three) potential regional powers agreed on the division of the area into sub-regional spheres of influence. This might occur in the Caribbean, for example, if Mexico became the dominant influence in Central America, Cuba among the Caribbean island states, and Venezuela turned its attention primarily toward the west coast of South America (the Andean Pact countries). In this situation the three second order powers could choose to cooperate with each other on an issue-by-issue basis, leaving the US to deal with them bilaterally on problems involving their sub-regional spheres of influence and multi-laterally (either negotiating a regional settlement or attempting to divide them) on regional issues or global issues on which they have attempted to reach a regional position.

Whatever power patterns develop in individual regions the likelihood is that, over the next five to ten years, regional politics in general will become more complex, more relevant to the shape of the global political system, and of greater salience to US policy making. In a few areas, making policy choices may become relatively simpler if a single second order power develops which will take on some responsibility for economic growth and political stability in the area and with which the US can deal as a spokesman for the entire region. In most others, however, regional politics may complicate international relations generally and create difficult policy choices for the US, especially if competition for dominance in a region escalates to open conflict. Finally, it is highly probable that US interests in every region, whether political relations within the region are peaceful or full of discord, will come under increasingly critical scrutiny, and even attack, as regional interests and concerns become more sharply defined and aggressively expressed.